



Department of Justice

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Northern District of New York

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PRESS RELEASE

Effort to Combat Oxycodone Abuse Leads to Federal Indictment and Arrests

United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian, joined by John P. Gilbride, Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration; Lev Kubiak, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Buffalo Division of U.S. Department of Homeland Security Investigations; Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Chief Andy Thomas; Clinton County District Attorney Andrew Wylie; Franklin County District Attorney Derek Champagne; Major Richard C. Smith, Jr., New York State Police Troop B Commander; Patrol Agent in Charge Norman Lague, United States Border Patrol; Dave Favro, Clinton County Sheriff; and Captain Michael Branch, Plattsburgh Police Department announced that their collaborative efforts to combat oxycodone abuse has resulted in the federal indictment of five people, four of whom have been arrested:

Donna Lazore, age 31, of Cornwall Island, Ontario;
Nathan Benedict, age 31, of Cornwall Island, Ontario;
Shane Dustin, age 20, of Fort Covington, New York; and
Neal Lauzon, age 27, of Plattsburgh, New York.

Each defendant is charged with conspiring to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute oxycodone in violation of federal law.¹ The indictment alleges that Lazore and Benedict supplied oxycodone for redistribution and that Dustin and Lauzon distributed oxycodone on the Saint Regis Mohawk territory and elsewhere. If convicted, each defendant faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$1,000,000 fine.

All four defendants have been arrested and have appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Larry Kudrle and pled not guilty. Lazore, Benedict, and Dustin are being held without bail pending detention hearings, which are scheduled for November 17, 2010. Lauzon is scheduled to appear in front of Judge Kudrle later today.

OxyContin® is a brand name formulation of the schedule II controlled substance oxycodone. OxyContin® is legitimately prescribed to treat moderate to severe pain. However, it is also popular with drug abusers for its pharmacological effects and because it has reliable strength and dosage levels, is a controlled release tablet with larger doses of the active ingredient, and is widely available.

¹ The charges are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

The diversion and abuse of OxyContin® has become a very significant problem in both the United States and Canada, including at Akwesasne.

United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian said, “We are committed to working with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Department, and federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to combat oxycodone distribution and abuse at Akwesasne and throughout the thirty-two counties of the Northern District of New York. Collaborative investigations such as the one that resulted in this indictment are critical to the success of that effort. We also need community support, education and prevention efforts, and the cooperation of drug companies, doctors, and pharmacies, to ensure that oxycodone goes only to help those who need it for legitimate medical treatment. Working together, we can promote public safety and community health at Akwesasne.”

DEA Special Agent in Charge John P. Gilbride stated, "These arrests and seizures epitomize how drug traffickers continue to try to make profit on the sale of illegally distributed drugs. In this case it wasn't heroin or cocaine; it was illegally diverted prescription medications that were being smuggled across our northern border. According to the 2008 Partnership Attitude Tracking Survey, seven of the ten drugs most commonly abused by teenagers are prescription medications. With the increase in prescription drug abuse and the dangers of opioid abuse, law enforcement has tightened our sights on identifying, investigating and dismantling these trafficking organizations to keep our cities safe from illegal drug use and abuse.”

Lev Kubiak, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Buffalo, New York stated: “HSI proactively investigates the smuggling of narcotics from Canada into the United States to identify, disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations at every level. Through coordinated investigative efforts with our federal, state and local law enforcement partners, we have effectively stopped the distribution and sale of significant quantities of drugs that were destined to the community of the Akwesasne Mohawk Indian Reservation. Together, we will continue to focus our resources on criminal organizations that distribute drugs like Oxycontin, which pose a significant threat to all local communities and threaten our collective security.”

The case is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Daniel Gardner of the United States Attorney's Office in Plattsburgh, New York. He can be reached at (518) 314-7800.